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AFTERWORD

A Duty and a Joy: The Publication of Bibliographies by Librarians

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SUMMARY. Librarians, because of their unique skills, are well-suited to publish bibliographies and, as information specialists, have an obligation to do so. Bibliographies are useful to the researcher as an outline to the discipline and to the librarian as an aid for research or for collection development. Legal bibliographies are a prime research tools, as they are a labor efficient research supplement and provide the breadth and background that might otherwise be unavailable.

INTRODUCTION

The role of a librarian is multi-faceted and constantly expanding; the organization and retrieval of information is both an art and a science. A librarian's contribution to research can be immeasurable, and the law librarian is particularly invaluable to the legal

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researcher. Publishing is one way a librarian can further contribute to these fields, and the compilation and dissemination of bibliographies is an appropriate and unique function for a librarian.

A bibliography can be described as "a list or catalog, often with descriptive or critical notes, of writings relating to a particular subject, period or author. . . ."[1] It may be published as an individual work or as part of a larger publication such as a treatise or law review article.

Librarians publish many different kinds of bibliographies, depending upon the author's field of expertise, area of professional involvement, and the bibliography's intended purpose. A reference librarian, for example, can be the source of various types of bibliographies. One such form is a subject-oriented bibliography, which can range from the comprehensive bibliography of "everything" produced on a particular topic, to a highly selective, annotated listing used to obtain the "best" titles available. A reference librarian may also be responsible for preparing a listing of the holdings for a particular institution offering a specialized collection. Another type of bibliography which can be prepared by a reference librarian is a legislative history, which assembles materials or citations to materials concerning a particular bill or statute. In addition, the reference librarian often produces bibliographies as part of any lectures given on how to use the library or to describe the library's resources and services.

Contrary to popular belief, it is not only the public service librarian who can be the source of bibliographic tools. A cataloger produces many different types of bibliographies. The library's card, book or computer catalog, is a bibliography of the collection of the institution which has a great impact on patrons. Another very common bibliography frequently produced by catalogers is a current awareness listing of new books or acquisitions. These may be limited to treatises, or be expanded to include recent articles, pamphlets, and other materials, received by an institution.

WHY BIBLIOGRAPHIES ARE NEEDED

Bibliographies are valuable resources for both the patron and the librarian. Their creation also contributes both to the development of the area studied and the knowledge of the author.

Bibliographies are valuable to the user as both a resource and as a guide or outline of the discipline. Researchers can utilize the intellectual framework provided by an organized and annotated bibliography to structure and conduct their research. Bibliographies are particularly useful because, as a rule, the bibliographer would have examined more sources, searched more indexes and databases, and considered more subject headings than the potential user of the bibliography.

Bibliographies are valuable to librarians in a number of ways. The acquisitions librarian can turn to a variety of bibliographies to determine what items should be added to the collection. The librarian might examine the acquisitions lists of other libraries for new additions (either as received by them or as cumulated in a source such as the *National Legal Bibliography*), or study subject-oriented "how to" bibliographies to locate the "best" titles for purchase; the librarian can utilize bibliographies to build the most useful collection, given the constant constraints imposed upon librarians. The technical services librarian can use the knowledge gained through the bibliographer's efforts to annotate catalog entries. The reference librarian can quickly "hone in" on the most appropriate source to answer a particular reference question or to recommend additional avenues to pursue for further research.

In addition to any value derived from use of a bibliography, the act of compiling a listing is itself beneficial, as the research conducted during the process will broaden the librarian's knowledge and understanding. In preparing bibliographies, the librarian wears the researcher's "hat," becomes a library user, and thus gains a different perspective of the needs of the public. Publication of a bibliography also focuses attention on and promotes a subject area by enhancing the subject's accessibility, particularly in light of the increasing dispersion and complexity of the literature.

Librarians are in a unique position to publish bibliographies, and should do so. As information scientists, they are aware of recent technological advances in the storage and retrieval of bibliographic data. These advances influence the compiling of bibliographies. The enormous amount of material in databases and the ability to download and manipulate information have tremendous effect on the bibliographer. More tools are available to assist the bibliographer in unearthing information, but this increased access may open

the floodgates and drown the bibliographer and user in a sea of material. The relationship of cost to benefit in the preparation and use of bibliographies has been changed by technological advances. It is very expensive to prepare an exhaustive bibliography, and the necessary step of locating many of the less accessible items requires a lot of time and money. Computer charges for searches can mount quickly. The time and money spent by the bibliographer in collecting, organizing and annotating the entries in the listing eliminates the need for duplicate expenditures by the user or the user's librarian.

THE IMPORTANCE OF LEGAL BIBLIOGRAPHIES

Published bibliographies have an ever-increasing importance despite the continuing advances in technology and the amount of information that can be accessed directly through databases by the end-user. They are especially valuable in conducting legal research. Because courts and law schools place emphasis on published opinions, lawyers and judges often focus on case research to the exclusion of treatises and articles. My experience, when working with lawyers, is that this concentrated approach may hamper their research. While conducting research in an area in which they are not expert, attorneys would be well-advised to start with directional guides and overviews. By ignoring the preliminary groundwork and, instead, attempting to locate "the case" or " the black letter law," researchers often lose sight of their real objective. Use of a "how to" guide or annotated bibliography puts the topic in perspective and provides the intellectual framework necessary for a reasoned analysis.

Bibliographies can also be used to locate secondary sources such as treatises and articles which are, in turn, important for locating primary sources. While digests or databases such as LEXIS and WESTLAW sometimes prove sufficient for locating appropriate case law, the digest publishers often have not assigned a key number to a particular issue and there may be no key phrase which would produce the relevant materials.

A research attitude emphasizing case law sometimes causes researchers to seek only the most current information without putting the results in an historical context. Because law is an ever-evolving and growing system, reliance on a very recent case stating "the

law'' may be dangerous, without an understanding of how and why the rule evolved. Published bibliographies, because they can view a topic from an historical perspective, often provide the key to the development and process of that area of the law. Additionally, simply sending the user to a database or published digest to locate the most recent material could, at times, be an inappropriate research technique. As information professionals, we should be helping to educate our patrons as well as assist them in finding the answer. We can promote these goals by encouraging the use of bibliographies and the employment of a sound research methodology.

CONCLUSION

Librarians as professionals should contribute to the education of their colleagues, their patrons, and the world at large, while constantly enriching their own education. One of the ways to be fulfilled as a professional is to publish, which makes information known to users in general. Bibliographies are one of the best vehicles through which librarians can distribute information, as these publications have great value to society, the librarian's institution, the person who prepared them, and the patrons who use them.

NOTE

1. WEBSTER'S THIRD NEW INTERNATIONAL DICTIONARY OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE UNABRIDGED 211 (1976).